

## **YOUTH AGING OUT SURVEY ISSUE: FAMILY/PERMANENCY CONNECTIONS**

As youth prepare to exit foster care, what strategies has your state implemented to locate, engage, and connect these youth with family resources?

### **Alaska**

Prior to leaving custody, policy and procedures requires that youth have an exit plan that addresses the issue of family resources. Attempts are made to give youth physical addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses so they can maintain contact.

Policy and procedure for the agency indicates that the exit plan should include details concerning the re-establishment of connections with birth families when appropriate and should identify adults who can act as mentors.

All youth nearing adulthood are encouraged to participate in their six month reviews and exit plan. In some regions, reviews are held on a quarterly basis to ensure that identified needs of the youth have been addressed.

### **Arizona**

In many areas of the state, Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Team Decision Making (TDM) team meetings are held when Independent Living (as another planned permanent living arrangement) is being considered as the permanency goal placement. Both the FGDM and the TDM processes emphasize identification and engagement of family, kin and others as resources for older youth in care. These teams may also be utilized prior to discharge from care, which may be at age 18 or older. Case planning also focuses on identification of permanent resources and connections, with the youth supported as the key decisionmaker in the process.

### **Colorado**

Developmental Disabilities Youth: The comprehensive transition protocol is designed to assist both systems in this process. This protocol encourages family involvement. This is also stressed in trainings and information given. Inclusion of family resources is encouraged in all phases of case planning when appropriate.

Foster Care Youth: The Colorado Family Services Plan (FSP) requires concurrent planning with permanency goals and an independent living plan for ages 16 years and up.

### **Connecticut**

The Department has implemented a mandatory annual planning conference for youth age 14 and over to achieve timely permanency and the identification, development and support of family members and significant adults willing to make a lifelong commitment. As a mandate of a youth's discharge planning conference, six months prior to a youth leaving care from ages 18 to 23, the "names and contact information for at least three significant family members or other adults in the youth's network" must be included and defined.

The Bureau of Adolescent Services recently hired a part-time social work trainee position whose focus is on sibling and lifelong connections. The Bureau has recently gone to contract with a new group home provider network called the PASS (Preparing Adolescents for Self-Sufficiency) Group Homes. One of its mandates will be to work with youth placed in PASS programs to cultivate family and positive adult connections as they progress towards adulthood.

## **Illinois**

IDCFS have several Divisions that assist in the identification of services for the Adolescent Population for possible family re-unification and significant support systems within the family structure.

In Policy 2001.17 Compliance with Monitoring of Sibling Visitation Requirement-Aristotle P Consent Decree is an important aspect of service delivery within the geographical regions throughout the state of IL. in ensuring children and youth maintain visitation on an on-going basis while with IDCFS. The Department has Policy Guide/Procedures/Rule that identifies the particular service provisions: some include 2001.17, 2005.06 Procedures for CA/N Investigation, 2006.04 Child & youth Investment Teams, Rule 330.4 Custody or Visitation/Supervision. The specific divisions that provide services are:

- Family Preservation
- Division of Child Protection (Networks within the communities to assist in maintaining families)
- Quality Assurance/Improvement Division (QA/I)
- Office of Education & Transitional Services
- Contracts with Community service Providers to assist in family stabilization and reunification
- Independent & Transitional Living Program throughout the state of IL.
  - (a) Purchase of Service Agencies (POS) work primarily with youth to assist in the maintenance of support systems for preparation of Adult Living and Self Sufficiency. POS Foster Care currently working under Performance Based Contracting.
  - (b) Youth identifies significant family & support systems that will help strengthen their goals for independence prior to emancipation.

## **Indiana**

Indiana's Youth Connections program ensures that all youth aging out of foster care have a permanent family or at least one committed, caring adult who provides guidance and support to the youth as they make their way into adulthood. Youth must voluntarily participate in the program. Specialists use internet search tools and family interviewing (teaming and engaging strategies in family team meetings) to discuss potential supportive family members.

## **Kansas**

Case Manager continually explore connections and resource placements with family resources throughout the life of a case. Child Welfare Community Based Service Providers in Kansas use different techniques and resources to help youth identify connections including family connections.

## **Maryland**

Maryland has established an 800 number to inform foster youth about services that are available to assist them. Exit interviews are conducted by the local departments to review community resources and support systems.

## **Minnesota**

- *The Homecoming Project* is Minnesota's five-year federal Adoption Opportunities demonstration grant to provide teen-specific recruitment efforts to increase the rate and frequency of adoption for youth under state guardianship ages 13 to 17. The Homecoming Project has been successful in helping to place Minnesota's longest waiting youth in adoptive families. The project also assists youth in establishing lifelong connections with permanent caring adults.
- The state administers Family Group Decision Making grants to counties across the state. In some counties these grants provide foster care youth with a "transition conference" which is a process designed to assist youth in identifying adult and/or family supports available to the youth once they have "aged-out" of care.

- The required Independent Living Plan for all youth age 16 + with a permanency disposition was amended in 2004 to add a category called “Establishing and Maintaining connections with Family and Community. Workers are instructed to work with the youth to identify family and other kinship relationships that can be supportive of their transition from foster care. Information to county workers on this topic is included in the Best Practices Guide. See link below:  
[http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Rendition=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=dhs\\_id\\_057253](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Rendition=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=dhs_id_057253)

### **Nebraska**

Nebraska’s goal is that youth have an adequate support system prior to discharge and that youth will have a support system available to assist in the transition to independent living. The worker, parent, care giver, mentor and others involved will help the youth devise step-by-step plans to achieve her/ his goals.

Options to provide services include:

1. Involvement with family or extended family members to maintain and improve relationships between the youth and family members, enhance positive interaction, and aid the family to understand the youth's development and the importance of the family;
2. Involvement with the foster family or appropriate residential staff to maintain and improve relationships between the youth and the foster family or staff, enhance positive interaction, and aid the foster family or residential staff to understand the youth's developmental task and the importance of continuity of relationships;
3. Identification and maintenance of other supportive relationships between the youth and persons outside the Department;
4. Arrange for a volunteer mentor to aid the youth in making the transition to independent living;
5. Arrange for informal supports with family members, relatives, or friends.

Approximately three months prior to the youths exit from the system, the Protection and Safety Worker should conduct a Team Meeting with all of the people important to the youth, including both formal and informal supports. The youth should help to identify who they want at the meeting. The Independent Living Plan for the youth should be discussed and at a minimum include the following issues: living arrangement, employment, educational plan (including the Former Ward Program and Educational and Training Vouchers Program), budget, transportation, health care, social life, recreation, acquisition of important documents and formal and informal support system. Roles and responsibilities should be assigned for any tasks needing to be accomplished prior to the transition to independent living.

### **New Mexico**

NM utilizes the Adolescent & Adoption Resource Team to help caseworkers ensure that youth have meaningful adult connections prior to aging out. This is an area where additional improvements are needed.

### **New York**

On July 8, 2004 OCFS released an informational letter to local social services districts and voluntary agencies which transmitted the Adolescent Services and Outcomes Practice Guidance Paper. The new framework for practice focuses on establishing permanent, nurturing adult connections for adolescents in foster care as well as providing these youth with life skills. Permanency is broadly defined. OCFS has also developed proposed regulations which would require the ongoing exploration of an adult permanency resource for youth in foster care. An adult permanency resource is defined as a caring adult who is committed to providing guidance and emotional support to a youth as the youth makes the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. The goal is that an adult permanency resource will be identified for each youth prior to the youth leaving foster care and that each youth will leave care with

such a connection to an adult. As part of the Family Assessment and Service Plan, caseworkers are required to document efforts to identify an adult permanency resource for the youth.

### **North Dakota**

ND completes relative searches upon the child's entry into foster care, and efforts are made to connect the child at that time. Depending on the individualized situation, the majority of our older youth in care maintain a connection to family throughout their stay. Due to North Dakota being sparsely populated, there seems to be a natural tendency for our youth to maintain connections throughout their foster care stay, and upon discharge. Family Connections are a focus at Child and Family Team Meetings, which occur on a quarterly basis. When determined to be in the best interest of the child and family, family members are invited to participate in child and family team meetings, and welcomed in to the child and family team process.

### **Oklahoma**

During each six month review of the Independent Living/Transitional Plan with the youth, possible family resources are explored. A diligent search by trained staff can be requested to attempt to locate family resources. If family is identified there is an attempt to arrange pre-exit visits in order to allow time for the youth to process any issues that may result from the reconnection with family members.

Some youth development funds (made possible through the Chafee funds) are available for youth 16 and above. These funds can be utilized for phone cards, stationary, and travel expenses to reconnect with appropriate family members.

### **South Carolina**

We have transition planning with youth prior to exiting foster care includes identification or follow up with people who have been significant in the youth's life. Workers use diligent searches to locate individuals if necessary.

### **Texas**

(1) Concurrent with transition planning for older youth in care, Circles of Support (COS) promotes youth connection and reconnection with biological parents, relatives, and fictive kin. COS, a youth driven process based on the Family Group Decision Making model (FGDM) and offered to youth in care beginning at 16 years of age, is a facilitated meeting with participants that a youth identifies as "caring adults" who make up their support system. Circles Of Support participants can be a youth's relatives, foster care providers, teachers, church members, mentor and so on. These participants come together to review the young person's transition plan, including strengths, hopes and dreams, goals and needs in the areas of education, employment, health/mental health, housing, and all PAL life skills training components. Each caring adult participant identifies a personal way they can help support the youth's transition plan and attaining their short- and long-term goals toward self-sufficiency. They then sign the transition plan to seal their agreements. Circles of Support are operating in all 11 regions across the state.

(2) If a COS cannot be arranged, a Transition Plan Meeting should be held after the youth turns 16. When a worker schedules a formal Transition Plan Meeting, caring adult(s) are identified, the youth's transition planning and permanency goals are documented, and the youth's transition plan is completed. As in COS, participants contribute to and sign the plan and take ownership in goal achievement.

- The assigned staff completes or updates the youth-driven transition plan (paper document) during the meeting.
- Participants contribute to and sign the plan.

- Assigned staff provides copies to relevant parties, some of whom may not be present for the staffing.
- Participants take ownership in goal achievement.

(3) DFPS has launched a new adoption campaign during Child Abuse Prevention Month called “*Why Not Me?*” Some 4,000 abused and neglected children in Texas are awaiting adoption, almost half of them are older than 9. The older the child, the longer they wait for adoption and each day they ask themselves, “*Why Not Me? Why can’t I have a family?*” Now DFPS is asking Texans, “Why Not You?” Why not adopt an older child? We are asking responsible, caring Texans to step up and adopt abused or neglected children, including older youth in care. To get this message to potential adoptive families, the Texas Association of Broadcasters (TAB) is helping DFPS distribute high quality TV and radio public service announcements, in both English and Spanish, to its member stations. TAB is urging stations to run the spots from April-June and again from September-November. These spots are available to view at anytime at [www.AdoptChildren.org](http://www.AdoptChildren.org). This website also lets prospective adoptive parents view and read about children waiting for adoption.

### **Virginia**

A variety of search engines are utilized by Virginia’s local departments of social services to assist in locating and connecting youth with family members.

### **Wyoming**

We do diligent searches at the beginning of the placement. First priority for placement is given to family members who can provide a safe and secure home for the youth. For youth on the Wind River Reservation, they are placed primarily with family members. All cases are to have a Family Partnership meeting to complete the case plan

### What strategies does your state use to connect youth with their siblings?

#### **Alaska**

As youth may be adopted by other families no longer in the state, this can be difficult. We do try and contact the adoptive parents/guardians for siblings and obtain their permission to maintain contact. This is usually successful. P&P indicates that youth should be assisted in compiling documents that list known relatives, their addresses, and their phone numbers. Visitation between siblings has always been important to the agency. After a youth leaves custody, visitation between siblings is encouraged when appropriate. This can be done either telephonically or face to face.

#### **Arizona**

State policy emphasizes the importance of placing siblings together, and encourages the use of FGDM as a strategy in identifying and supporting family and kin as placement resources. When youth cannot be placed with their siblings, staff is guided to engage the out-of-home care provider, relatives, CASA (if assigned) and others to support sibling contact through visitation, phone calls, letters, etc. The institution of a “shared-parenting” curriculum for care providers, called PS-MAPP, emphasizes this as well.

#### **Colorado**

Sibling group placements and sibling group adoptions are our best practices.

#### **Connecticut**

As discussed above, the Bureau has recently hired a person to concentrate on issues around sibling connections. The Department is considering a number of possibilities around enhancing sibling

connections including a summer sibling camp, phone cards to increase and enhance communications, visits with siblings and mentors, family “reunions” on a quarterly basis and a sibling survival kit which will include a camera, writing paper, envelopes and postage, and other items to keep youth connected. The Department also attempts to keep siblings placed together whenever possible.

### **Illinois**

Aristotle P Consent Decree is a mechanism designed to ensure that all children and youth are connected to identify family members and mandates the services are in place. Identifying and monitoring such services are done in the following ways:

- Administrative Case Review (ACR)
- Case Management /Supervision
- Data Collection on Sibling Visitation
- Quality Assurance /Improvement & Monitoring

### **Indiana**

We connect them with family members’ information through the family case manager.

### **Kansas**

Youth in custody and out of home placement who also have siblings in custody and placement have scheduled visitation with siblings.

### **Maryland**

Local departments make attempts to facilitate sibling visits on a regular basis. Siblings are invited to participate in special events, such as the annual statewide sibling camp activity.

### **Minnesota**

- Minnesota Statute and Rule, as well as Department of Human Services’ policies require siblings to be placed together in foster care and adoptive families whenever possible. For siblings who cannot be placed together, visitation between the siblings is required to be documented in the children’s out-of-home placement plans. Sibling placement and visitation are to be addressed in court reviews every 90 days from the termination of parental rights until permanency is achieved.
- The Out-Of-Home Placement Agreement requires sibling separations to be identified. A copy of the out-of-home placement agreement is attached to the court report.
- For children under state guardianship at the same time, counties must request and receive consent from the commissioner of Human Services to separate siblings if the county does not plan for them to be adopted by the same family at the same time. The department has identified a team to review county requests and make recommendations to the commissioner’s designee regarding whether to approve or deny a request for sibling separation.
- The Department of Human Services encourages counties to work with families who are adopting separated siblings to develop appropriate formal contact agreements to ensure that siblings continue visitation and contact with each other after adoption finalization.
- DHS Policy Bulletin #03-68-04 “Improving Outcomes for Children”. This policy bulletin contains information on placement of siblings and visitation between siblings separated in foster and adoptive homes.
- The Department of Human Services’ adoption unit provides phone and e-mail consultation regarding sibling placement, separation, and visitation.
- The Department of Human Services’ adoption unit developed a power point curriculum on policy, research, best practice, and procedures regarding sibling placement, separation, and visitation. This curriculum has been, and continues to be, presented at a variety of venues around the state.

## **Montana**

Our state has held a sibling camp for youth.

## **Nebraska**

Our policy requires case managers to create opportunities for family involvement and contact (this includes sibling contact), and to encourage parents to maintain contact between siblings when appropriate. Nebraska's Child and Family Services Review identified both placing youth in close proximity to their parents and placements with siblings. In addition, Nebraska has an Independent Living Sibling Camp each summer in which youth placed separately in foster care convene at a camp to work on life skills and strengthening the bonds between siblings. Approximately 65 attend each year and others who have attended the camp sometimes continue to participate as staff or youth leaders in subsequent years.

## **New Mexico**

QA & AART work with caseworkers to ensure connections with siblings are not only maintained, but also fostered. Policy & procedure promotes the maintenance and development of these relationships.

## **New York**

OCFS regulations, which took effect on July 26, 1988, for the first time provided regulatory requirements that govern the placement of siblings together in foster care or adoptive placement. Chapter 854 of the Laws of 1990 evidenced support for this practice by the New York State Legislature. The statutory language strengthened the practice requirements even more by mandating regular visiting and communication for separated siblings and by adding that both placement together and visiting for separated siblings is presumptively in the child's best interests, unless contrary to the child's health, safety or welfare. OCFS regulations were amended effective September 25, 1991, in order to fully incorporate the statutory requirements of Chapter 854. On June 8, 1992, Administrative Directive 92 ADM-24 was issued. The directive remains in effect. Most recently, OCFS statewide foster care youth advisory group, Youth in Progress, have identified the placement of siblings together and sibling visitation as a priority issue. As a result of this and a recent performance audit in this area, OCFS found that improvement is needed in this area. OCFS has recently drafted *Keeping Siblings Connected: A White Paper on Siblings in Foster Care and Adoptive Placements in New York State*. OCFS expects to release this paper soon to local social services districts and voluntary agencies. This white paper addresses the benefits as well as the challenges of taking siblings into account in every foster care and adoptive placement and every visiting plan.

## **North Dakota**

Focus on sibling connections is an integral piece of our foster care system. Placement with siblings is given priority. If this is not possible, regular contact between the siblings is encouraged and supported, and a requirement of our state.

## **Oklahoma**

Oklahoma policy is that every reasonable attempt to place siblings together is made, unless there is documented evidence that such a placement is not in the children's best interest. If siblings are separated, contact and visitation is required. Ongoing efforts are made to locate a suitable resource that enables all siblings to be together. All efforts are made to place sibling groups together in both temporary and permanent placements, however, when this is not possible, face-to-face, phone, letter, or e-mail contact between all siblings is arranged a minimum of once every four weeks until the siblings are reunited in out-of-home placement or the permanency plan is achieved. The CW worker verifies this contact with the placement provider at each monthly contact. Sibling contacts approved by the CW worker may be arranged by placement providers.

Oklahoma also has a resource recruitment & retention committee that meets each month and works to develop ideas & tools to recruit more resource homes for sibling groups. The committee is currently developing a recruitment campaign that educates the public regarding the need for placements for large siblings group. The effort is planned to occur during the week that contains National Sibling Day.

Many of the youth who participate in Oklahoma's Independent Living Program mention the need to remain connected to their siblings. Four years ago, two Girl Scouts from a local troop approached the agency about organizing a weekend retreat for siblings separated in care. The Scouts planned and executed the weekend retreat as part of their project to earn their Gold Award. This even was so well received by the sibling groups that Oklahoma now holds an annual Sibling Event day where siblings from across the state can reunite for a day of fun activities.

### **South Carolina**

Each child's case plan includes visitation plans for visits with parents, siblings, and others who are significant in the child's life. At a minimum of 6 month intervals, sibling visitation plans are reassessed, and actions to reunite siblings in the same placement are reassessed and initiated whenever possible.

### **Texas**

DFPS policy and the Texas Family Code require siblings be placed together unless there are reasons not to. When a child has one or more siblings who have been placed with other substitute caregivers, the child must be given appropriate opportunities to maintain contact with those siblings, unless there are identified therapeutic or safety reasons not to. Workers, parents, and caretakers make arrangements to facilitate visitations, based on available resources. Additionally, the sibling of a child who is separated from the child because of an action taken by DFPS may request access to the child by filing suit. If the contact is in the best interest of the child the court must grant reasonable access.

### **Virginia**

Virginia's Foster Care Policy encourages visitation and to maintain connections with siblings and family members.

### **Wyoming**

All youth are placed with their siblings if possible. If they are not placed with siblings, a visitation plan is created to assure that the visits are made.

What other strategies does your state utilize to obtain and promote permanent connections with other adults?

### **Alaska**

As part of the exit plan, youth are asked to identify significant people in their life and to identify what that person can help them with. Youth are also linked to organizations where youth who have been or are in foster care meet to discuss issues they face. Youth also have access to the regional Independent Living Specialist who knows of regional resources that are available to them.

### **Arizona**

The Children's Services Policy Manual was rewritten with a "Family-Centered" focus and emphasizes the promotion of permanent connections for all youth in care. The manual contains numerous "Best Practice" Tips and links to supportive, informing documents such as the National Child Welfare Resource Center

on Youth Services (NCWRCYS) *Permanency Planning: Creating Life-Long Connections: What Does it Mean for Adolescents* publication.

Case management services for Arizona's Chafee population (older youth identified as "likely to age out of foster care") are specialized in Maricopa and Pima Counties, where the vast majority of youth in care reside. Case Managers are assigned to "Young Adult Program" (YAP) units and have caseloads that are exclusively composed of older youth in care who are facing emancipation at age 18. Although youth are legal adults at age 18, they may voluntarily remain in care and services until age 21, or avail themselves of aftercare services. The YAP case management units participate in an annual training and development conference for the purpose of staying abreast of the current issues and needs of older youth in care. Each year, youth in care and alumni participate as co-facilitators of a variety of skill building and program improvement activities. These activities are designed to educate/inform staff as to the challenges and needs of older youth in care.

The state Chafee program also supports the establishment of permanent adult connections by emphasizing the participation of youth in mentoring, education, employment and other school and community (including faith based) activities. Youth are encouraged to participate in team sports, school and community clubs, volunteering, faith/spiritual and other activities which expose them to positive adults in their communities.

### **Colorado**

Developmental Disabilities Youth who are served in foster care are often times able to remain in the same home as an adult. At that time, the home changes from a foster home to an adult host home where the child resides as an adult and has most of the same freedoms as any other adult. This encourages a permanent connection with adults that remain in the child's life to support their independent living as an adult within their home.

Youth Permanency Summits conduct trainings around the state with a Train-The-Trainer team composed of youth and adults to a variety of professionals. Topics include case mining, concurrent planning, and youth voice in team decision-making-placements-permanency hearings.

Project 1.27/Faith-Based Community conducts trainings and wraparound services for adoption families within diverse faith community settings.

### **Connecticut**

The Bureau provides 300+ mentoring slots for adolescents in our care. The hope is that this voluntary program will be expanded over the next year. The Department contracts with two agencies to do "Life Long Family Connections" work with 50 youth. The Department has recently hired 3 or 4 retired employees, on a part-time basis, to enhance the Life Long Family Connections work. The Bureau has made mentoring and community connections a mandatory part of its recent contracts including PASS Group Homes, Supportive Work Educational Training Programs (transitional living programs) and work to learn programs.

### **Illinois**

IDCFS uses various instruments to obtain and set minimal standards of service delivery for every family child and youth involved in the department. The mechanisms and methods to assess, monitor and evaluate performance of service delivery within as well as outside the department are:

- a. Administrative Case Review (ACR)
- b. Integrated Assessment of each family, child and youth
- c. CANS –Child, Adolescent Needs Assessment
- d. Quality Assurance/Improvement Division

- e. Monitoring Division of Service Delivery by POS Agencies
- f. On going Discharge Planning

These mechanisms listed above help in the operations of service delivery. The implementation of identified services programmatically as well as individualized have on-going assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the minimal standards set by IDCFS. One of the standards set by IDCFS is the “Development of Positive Relationships” this goal is with our families, children and youth.

### **Indiana**

We have mentoring with former foster parents, former coaches/teachers/ministers

### **Kansas**

Youth who are exiting the child welfare system for reasons other than reintegration, adoption or guardianship are expected to have connection to a positive adult role model. This is an outcome of our Child Welfare Community Based Service Provider contracts.

### **Maryland**

Many locals have established mentoring programs such as the Team Decision Making planning sessions. The Youth Permanency Committee was developed as a result of the National Youth Permanency convening in 2006, which continues to meet. There has APPLA training for judges, attorneys and staff.

### **Minnesota**

- *The Homecoming Project* is Minnesota’s five-year federal Adoption Opportunities demonstration grant to provide teen-specific recruitment efforts to increase the rate and frequency of adoption for youth under state guardianship ages 13 to 17. The Homecoming Project has been successful in helping to place Minnesota’s longest waiting youth in adoptive families. The project also assists youth in establishing lifelong connections with permanent caring adults.
- *Minnesota Permanency Demonstration* is a project supported by a federal Title IV-E waiver. The project will explore the advantages and disadvantages of a new benefit set that will be available to some foster parents who make permanent commitments to children already in their care through adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody. Foster parents receive a greater financial benefit for children in their care than adoptive parents and permanent relative custodians. Foster parents who choose a permanency option for children in this project will receive the same financial resources for children in their care as they received as foster parents.

### **Montana**

We use many resources. We have had multiple trainings and education with Permanency Specialists and Family Resource Staff on issues of permanence, defining relationships, etc. Our state has participated in the Permanence for Adolescent project with the NRCFCPP and Adoption Exchange. We continue to develop education on this topic and are currently developing an annual mandatory training on concurrent and permanency planning. We have a statewide team focusing on permanency issues around foster parent recruitment and retention, and a licensing and permanency work group.

### **Nebraska**

In addition to the efforts listed in #1 above, when needed and wanted we connect youth with volunteer mentor organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and TeamMates. We also have Foster Youth Councils that include adults (former foster youth) as part of their membership and often times are a valuable resource for younger youth participating on the councils.

## **New Mexico**

AART aids in this process, as does the caseworker and IL staff.

## **New York**

OCFS makes training and technical assistance available. On May 24, 2007, OCFS sponsored a teleconference on youth permanency for local social services districts and voluntary agencies. The teleconference will feature youth and their adult permanency resource.

## **North Dakota**

At this time, most of our efforts in this area are on an informal basis, and are accomplished by encouraging “informal supports” to participate in child and family team meetings. Informal supports may be a coach, church, community member, teacher, neighbor, friend, etc... We complete strength and needs assessment on a quarterly basis, and attempt to meet the needs of the youth based on individual strengths.

## **Oklahoma**

During each Independent Living/Transition Plan meeting, emphasis is placed on the youth identifying five adults who would agree to becoming an ongoing support system for the youth during their transition period. If the youth calls the Yes I Can Network for aftercare services, one of the five adults might be contacted to provide mentoring or support services to the youth.

## **South Carolina**

Information is obtained through family meetings at entry into care, and contact information is recorded and updated throughout child’s placement. The permanent plan coding for APPLA identifies children with permanent connections.

In April 2006 – March 2007 the state participated in the National Governor’s Association Policy Academy on Youth in Transition. A committee was developed to address the need for a consistent level of adult support so that youth leaving care have a permanent adult relationship to provide encouragement and guidance. The strategies of the committee included a telephone hotline for youth to call, engaging the community to make connections for youth and ongoing support from foster parents.

The State Foster Parent Association has assumed a leadership role in helping foster parents understand the importance of providing adult support for youth in foster care. Ten foster parents have now been trained as trainers on the use of Life Books. These trainers will continue to train other foster parents on the importance and use of the Life Book as tool in supporting children in foster care. The S. C. Foster Parent Association Annual Training Conference was held in March 2007 for foster parents and agency staff. Workshops were provided to help to increase foster parents’ knowledge and skill in supporting youth in foster care.

The Youth Leadership Development Project, a partnership between the Urban League and the Department of Social Services, has provided the mechanism for leaders in the community to be educated about the needs of youth who are in foster care. The Project has been a key to development of potential employers for youth and in preparing youth for employment.

As a result of the Adult Support Committee’s initial policy review, it became apparent that a more comprehensive review and revision of policy related to Independent Living Services was needed. That review is underway and revisions will include procedures for identification and documentation of adult supports and life long connections in preparation for youth transitioning out of foster care. A telephone hotline for youth to call will be the same agency number currently used for the 24-Hour Helpline for foster children. Business card sized cards are available in each county and regional office for staff to give to youth.

The importance of connections is the underlying theme in this year's statewide annual Independent Living Conference. All adults at the conference will participate in a workshop on Permanent Connections and youth will participate in workshops led by Foster Club that will emphasize same. The State Director of the agency will further emphasize the message that we are all interdependent, rather than independent. Skills can be gained in knowing how to build and support permanent connections both now and in the future.

### **Texas**

All youth 16 and older are required to identify at least one Caring Adult. This is also tracked in the automation system.

In addition to COS, the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program helps older teens in foster care gain skills and resources they will need for adult life after leaving foster care. Mentors serve as caring adult guides and positive role models and encourage youth toward career and educational goals.

Youth Transition Centers exist in several areas across the state. In a transition or one stop center, a young person can go to one location to complete their GED certification, receive PAL services, take a community college prep course, talk to the onsite apartment locator service, and receive employment training and placement services. Transition Centers also provide an opportunity for the youth to develop personal and community connections, another important step in transitioning to adulthood.

### **Virginia**

Virginia promotes adoption when reunification or placements with relatives are no longer options for the youth. In addition, some localities are utilizing Kevin Campbell's "Finding Families" approach. It is an intensive relative search approach being implemented in a variety of western states. Innovative techniques are demonstrated to assist child welfare social workers to locate family/non-family members of foster care youth via internet search sites including family members not living in the United States. This training can be beneficial in locating family members for older youth.

### **Wyoming**

There are ongoing Family Partnership meetings and as other relatives are found they are included in the planning as the case progresses. Relatives are often a concurrent plan. At times relatives are licensed as foster parents to provide the family the financial and emotional support they need for the success of the placement.

### Name and contact information of state individual regarding permanency issues

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When families and children are identified as needing services from IDCFS, it is incumbent on our department to adequately assess those needs so that the families and children (when possible) are aware of the expectations required to maintain or reunite the family back together. Always the need is based on Safety, Well Being of the Children and Permanency,

This method by which the Department is guided is considered a Permanency Goal. What ever goal has been identified by the Department and court when necessary it is our responsibility to ensure the family and children rights are not violated in the decision making process of their Permanency Goal / Hearings.

Again, this is based primarily on assessment, identification of service need, implementation of services, monitoring and on-going evaluation of the stated Permanency Goal of the family, child or youth.

The Permanency Issues are initially the responsibility of the Court (State of Illinois) and after Temporary Custody is granted it is then IDCFS. The goal again is based on the above process and set-forth by federal & state guidelines, Policies and procedures and Rules and Regulations in the implementation of appropriate identified goals / interventions for the family and children.

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